

Vitamin D

How 32 supplements really measure up

OUR LATEST TESTS yield good news for the many people who take a daily vitamin D or calcium/D pill: All of the 32 products met or exceeded their claimed levels of the vitamin, disintegrated or dissolved properly where applicable, and were well below the safe upper limit set by the Institute of Medicine.

But we found levels of lead that exceeded a limit for reproductive risk set by California Proposition 65 in nine out of 12 products that combined vitamin D with calcium. That's a common supplement pairing because vitamin D helps the body absorb calcium. We think there are better choices than those nine, which are listed in a separate section in the Ratings.

We also found that costs can vary widely, as shown in the chart. So choose by price and preference of pill type, and consider whether you want a product that also contains calcium.

People who get enough midday sun in warmer months probably don't need extra vitamin D, which the body makes from exposure to sunlight. But you might need vitamin D if you have osteoporosis or a condition such as celiac disease that impairs the body's ability to absorb fat-soluble vitamins, including D.

▣ DID YOU KNOW?

Few foods naturally contain vitamin D. Fatty fish and cod-liver oils have the highest levels. Smaller amounts are available in beef liver, cheese, and egg yolks. Most of the vitamin D consumed in the U.S. diet comes from fortified foods, such as milk.

For our tests, at least three samples of each product were analyzed for their level of vitamin D3 (the form of the vitamin most were claimed to contain) and, in the case of

the combined products, their level of calcium. The supplements with calcium were also tested for the presence of arsenic, cadmium, lead, and mercury.

Average vitamin D3 levels ranged from 105 percent to 141 percent of the labeled amount in the adult and children's vitamin D-only products (1,000 international units, or IU, and 400 IU, respectively). But even the higher levels were

Ratings

In cost order, within groups.

Product	Type	Package count	Cost/year ¹
ADULT VITAMIN D All met our quality criteria, which includes meeting label claims of 1,000 IU vitamin D and passing U.S. Pharmacopeia (USP) disintegration test.			
Trader Joe's Vitamin D	softgel	180	\$ 10.15
Now Vitamin D3	softgel	180	13.60
Nature Made D3 Liquid Softgels 1,000 IU	softgel	300	13.75
The Vitamin Shoppe Vitamin D3 1,000 IU	softgel	200	14.25
Whole Foods Market Vitamin D3 1,000 IU	softgel	250	15.05
GNC Vitamin D-3 1000	tablet	180	15.20
Rite Aid Vitamin D-3 1,000 IU	tablet	240	15.20
Walgreens D3	softgel	400	16.35
CVS D3 1,000 IU	softgel	300	17.05
Country Life Vitamin D3 1,000 IU	softgel	200	17.60
Nature Made D3 1,000 IU	tablet	300	19.55
Blue Bonnet D3 1,000 IU	capsule	180	26.15
Nature's Bounty High Potency D3-1,000 IU	softgel	350	35.05
Solgar Vitamin D3 1,000 IU	softgel	250	36.50
Shaklee Vita-D3	tablet	90	38.10
Sundown High Potency Vitamin D3 1,000 IU	softgel	100	47.10
ADULT CALCIUM PLUS VITAMIN D All met our quality criteria, which includes meeting label claims of calcium and vitamin D and not exceeding USP and California Proposition 65 limits for heavy metals.			
Sundown Liquid-Filled Calcium (600 mg calcium, 500 IU vitamin D per pill)	softgel	170	60.55
Nature's Bounty Calcium 1,200 mg (600 mg calcium, 500 IU vitamin D per pill)	softgel	120	63.90
Oscal Chewable D3 (500 mg calcium, 600 IU vitamin D per pill)	chewable	120	101.00
CHILDREN'S VITAMIN D All met our quality criteria, which includes meeting label claims of 400 IU vitamin D.			
Carlson Laboratories For Kids 400 IU Liquid Drops ²	liquid	365	13.20
Nature Made Kids Chewable D3 400 IU ²	chewable	320	14.20
Natural Factors Vitamin D3 For Kids	chewable	100	18.60
CVS Children's Chewable Vitamin D 400 IU ²	chewable	150	20.45
EXCEEDED CALIFORNIA PROPOSITION 65 LEAD LIMIT FOR REPRODUCTIVE RISK ³			
Caltrate 600 + D	tablet	200	68.60
Citracal Maximum	tablet	240	91.25
Citracal Petites Calcium Citrate + D3	tablet	200	96.00
CVS Calcium 600 + D	tablet	600	21.60
Equate Calcium Citrate + D (Walmart)	caplet	200	58.05
Kirkland Signature Calcium 600 mg + D3 (Costco)	tablet	500	17.30
Oscal Calcium Supplement Extra D3	caplet	120	93.70
Schiff Super Calcium	softgel	120	68.45
Walgreens Calcium 600 + D	tablet	400	26.90

¹ Based on average paid for tested samples and maximum daily dose recommended on label. Prices are rounded to the nearest 5 cents. ² For children older than 2. ³ All samples fell within the permissible limit for lead as a carcinogen (cancer-causing substance) as defined under Proposition 65, which requires manufacturers to list ingredients known to cause cancer or reproductive risk that exceed "safe harbor levels."

well below the Institute of Medicine's maximum safe daily level of 4,000 IU.

Most adults up to age 70 need no more than about 600 IU of vitamin D a day; older people, 800 IU. Avoid exceeding 4,000 IU

daily unless your doctor has prescribed a higher dose to treat a deficiency. Too much vitamin D can cause kidney damage. Other symptoms of toxic amounts of D include confusion, nausea, and weakness.



Trader Joe's

Sundown

Carlson Laboratories